

**News from Rep. Stephanie Herseth**

**For Immediate Release**

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**HERSETH ANNOUNCES \$800,000 IN TELEMEDICINE GRANTS**

**USDA Rural Development Funds Will Help Improve Access to Health Care in Rural Communities**

December 6, 2005, Washington, D.C. - U.S. Rep. Stephanie Herseth today announced more than \$800,000 in USDA Rural Development grant money for South Dakota distance learning and telemedicine investment. The funds will help ensure access to health care in rural communities across South Dakota.

Herseth said, "Rural communities and families face unique obstacles when it comes to health care. These grants will help South Dakota's health care providers deliver quality, affordable health care to all South Dakotans, particularly those who are not close to our larger health care facilities. Telemedicine holds great promise for bridging obstacles of geography, and I am pleased that South Dakota can be at the forefront of developing and implementing these technologies. While the projects receiving these grant funds will benefit nearly 100,000 South Dakotans, the entire state will benefit from the advances these programs will bring."

The funds are broken down into two grants, including:

**Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant - \$500,000**

This Rural Development grant will be used for computed teleradiology with remote access to physicians and distance education through videoconferencing equipment for patients and healthcare professionals. Filmless teleradiology will be provided to nine hospitals and clinics in South Dakota, and videoconferencing equipment will be provided to two of the end-user sites. Benefits to rural residents include a reduction in health care disparities due to access to

radiological and other specialty healthcare. Healthcare providers will benefit from having a system available for timely and accurate diagnoses of medical conditions. This project will benefit over 73,000 residents of eastern South Dakota, and includes the counties of Marshall, Spink, Walworth, Roberts, Charles Mix, Hutchinson, Jerauld, Lincoln, Minnehaha, Brown, Davison and Yankton.

### **Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant - \$307,831**

This Rural Development grant will be used to establish a remote-care strategy for improving ICU processes. The system will utilize nurse stations with videoconferencing and additional telecommunications equipment linked to the ICU facilities, patient room monitors, cameras, microphones and a patient monitoring hub site. The system will serve approximately 17,000 residents in rural South Dakota, including residents in Minnehaha, Moody, Gregory, Grant, and Bon Homme counties. The Avera McKennan Hospital and the University Health Center in Sioux Falls will serve as the hub.

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*Congresswoman Stephanie Herseith serves South Dakota in the U.S. House of Representatives. She is a member of the Blue Dog Coalition, a group of moderate Democrats committed to fiscal discipline and strong national security, and is co-chair of the Rural Working Group, which is dedicated to raising the profile of issues important to rural America. She also serves on three committees vital to South Dakota's interests: Agriculture, Veterans' Affairs and Resources.*